

New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

98



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New American Paintings was founded in 1993 as an experiment in art publishing. With over five thousand artists reviewed annually, it has become America's largest and most important series of artist competitions. Each competition is cataloged in a unique volume: Northeast, South, Midwest, West, Pacific Coast, and MFA Annual. Featured artists are selected on the basis of artistic merit and provided space for free.

Northeast

CT, DE, ME, MA, NH, NJ, PA, RI, VT, NY

MFA Annual

CURRENT MASTERS OF FINE ARTS CANDIDATES

South

AL, AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV

Midwest

IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI

West

AZ, CO, ID, KS, MT, ND, NE, NM, NV, OK, SD, TX, UT, WY

Pacific Coast

AK, CA, HI, OR, WA



Editor's Note

The Northeast is the region from which we operate The Open Studios Press, and therefore it's the most familiar region we address every year at *New American Paintings*. The curators who jury this competition are often colleagues and friends from some of the strongest and most exciting contemporary museums in this part of the country, and this edition is no exception. Curator at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and the juror of our 98th edition of the magazine, **Dina Deitsch** has for years made it her business to make it into some of the most exciting studios in New England for the deCordova Biennial. From New York to New Hampshire, Dina is there, pen in hand, ready to hash out ideas and talk practice. We are excited to have her make the juror's selections for the region this year.

The growing attention to spatial, sculptural, material—even experimental—explorations by contemporary painters is a frequent topic in my conversations with Dina. It is with this subject in mind that this edition's Spotlight feature focuses on the work of New York artist **Franklin Evans**, a painter who in recent years has created multidimensional and chromatically intense installation spaces of colored tape, which operate as physical brushstrokes in a three-dimensional space and unexpected, perspectival points of entry.

Our Behind the Scenes interview follows the path of former Bostonite **Kristen Dodge**, from New England art world fledgling to

newly successful Lower East Side dealer. Now more than a year into her very own downtown space, DODGE gallery, Kristen talks to us about her experience with taking her dreams on the road and what it's done for her artists, and her career, in the process.

I often think back to an early conversation in the Houston studio of the painter Aaron Parazette, and a comment he made to me that, "painting is a dead-end creative practice with endless possibilities." I realize with every issue of *New American Paintings* the undeniable truth of this statement, and with each subsequent acknowledgement comes another opportunity to reassess the dead end itself—the simple use of the medium of paint—made complicated and extraordinary by a few discrete actions somewhere in a studio. It's exciting to feel as if you have a seat to the unfolding of the linear narrative of art history and contemporary practice. As the work leaving studios shifts, we also shift so as to accommodate it, and for nearly 20 years we've been celebrating the achievements made within those studio walls, presenting them and the artists who produced them to an audience eager to receive them. ■

Evan J. Garza
Editor-at-Large

Dina Deitsch

Curator, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum



In my daily curatorial practice I have the opportunity to think about my region—New England—a lot. Maybe too much. I work at a museum, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, with a 60-year history of showcasing contemporary art of New England, and since joining the team there have had the pleasures and pains of organizing two New England Biennials. But I can tell you that despite the many winter road trips through northern Vermont and summer treks through the woods of Connecticut, I am by no means an expert on the art here. I am merely a very, very active observer; a fact that I confess now because of the frequency I get asked about the 'nature' and 'character' of New England art.

While the Northeast can be characterized by its cold weather, ties to the earliest days of American history, a collection of some very good schools, and perhaps, what is politely termed a Yankee frugality or better yet, pragmatism, the truth of the matter is that the art here bears no such defining characteristics. In the realm of painting, where the limits are the mind and hand, there is a remarkable range of forward-thinking ideas, subject matter, and technique. In the grouping of painters featured in this issue of *New American Paintings* you'll come across works that speak more to the human experience—both local and global—and a broadening effect of thinking through painting as a material, as color, and less as a means to an end. This shift towards the materiality of paint seems to almost reinvigorate the medium, taking it into the space of the world itself.

Summer Wheat is perhaps the boldest example of this technique in her built-up canvases that convincingly mimic the falling flesh of the zombie faces she depicts. Rivaling traditions of pictorial space and the flatness of abstraction seem to mingle and merge in the architectural interiors of Echo Eggebrecht. Eugenie Tung offers up photographic interiors that are haunted by their painted-out elements of the occupier's possessions, leaving us with move-in ready spaces, cleared out through the painted gesture alone. Perhaps because painting is so connected to the two-dimensional surface, space and the lack thereof loom large as the elephant-in-the-room.

It is little surprise then that the landscape genre, and its offshoot, the architectural subject matter—both powerful ways to organize space—emerge as fodder for critical examination. Buildings crop up, but mostly in ruins, in Seth Clark's and Amze Emmons's hands, as a critique of progress and human dominance of this world. Cristi



Boothby p21



Bovasso p25



Opheim p80



Eggebrecht p53



Smith p117



Yoder p156

Rinklin isolates the luminous skylapses of Turner and Hudson River School paintings and adds snippets of linear clouds—pulled from the worlds of animation and Asian scrolls—to merge landscape traditions. Joe Wardwell trades in the emotions of Romantic-era painting as well, but overlays those sweet visions of the American west with rock-n-roll lyrics—conflating Manifest destiny, Spaghetti Western films, and the raw, emotional energy and youth of American rock of the 1960s. Michael Yoder similarly uses text to disrupt faded, romantic spaces by interjecting rainbow versions of Robert Indiana's *LOVE* sculpture into the interiors of crumbling cathedrals. In these, the space of history collides neatly and in full jest with a contemporary lexicon of quotation and reexamination.

It is the task of artists, in many ways, to give us conflicting images of the past as a reminder that history is and always has been a constructed narrative. Ria Brodell portrays women who have passed as men in order to accomplish great things in her *Butch Heroes* series. She does so with an illustrator's touch, replete with scroll titles of Victorian-era valentines. Justin Richel references a similar style and era in his portraits of 'great men' whose white wigs now house a menagerie of birds, sea life, and forest creatures.

Figures pull themselves out of history in the hyper-real portraits by Jason Bard Yarmosky, Jason Seeley, and Chelsey Tyler Wood. In full body and excruciating detail, their figures are both surreal and touching, and remarkable displays of the human form's expressive capacity. Photorealism is given additional new blood in Ben Weiner and Hannah Cole's close-up work. Weiner's rich, Marilyn Minter-esque images of paint dollops make you literally want to eat the paint, pushing at its materiality in a way that complements Summer

Wheat's blatant excesses of the medium. Cole uses *trompe-l'œil* techniques to depict the painting around her every day, in the graffitied manhole covers and security doors of her neighborhood streets. These painters each use exacting techniques and extreme close-ups to push our sense of reality to the verge of the surreal and then into abstraction,

Andrew Brischler and Cary Smith work with color and form that cling and reiterate the canvases in their abstract work. Brischler uses stripes and planes and wonderful color as Smith uses negative space to articulate biomorphic, abstract forms against her canvases. Laurel Sparks creates abstraction from an anchoring image—a gaudy chandelier that serves her well as an ambiguous form and clever reference to the modernist abhorrence of "decoration." She uses excess and a sophisticated play of positive and negative space and color to create forms in flux—a state that we can all relate to.

In all, the group of Northeast painters featured here contends with the state of their medium today through history, ingenuity, and above all, wit and humor. They underscore the continued relevance and vitality of painting in an art landscape that is, by its very nature, unfixed and under constant change. And just as art making today is decisively promiscuous in its scope of materials and forms of practice, so too has contemporary painting expanded beyond its material borders and into new radical territories. The Northeast, for all its chilly weather and Yankee pragmatism, continues to produce painters at the edges of their discipline. ■

Juror's Selections



The following section is presented in alphabetical order.

Biographical information has been edited.

Prices for available work may be found on p182.



Ryan McLennan

The Immortal | acrylic and graphite on paper, 52 x 77 inches



Ryan McLennan

For Even Gods Putrefy | acrylic and graphite on paper, 52 x 70 inches



Ryan McLennan

Abomination | acrylic and graphite on paper, 59 x 52 inches

Ryan McLennan

Brooklyn, NY

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b. 1980 Norfolk, VA

Solo Exhibitions

- 2011 *Abominations*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009 *The Strain of Inheritance*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
Lottery, Walker Contemporary, Boston, MA
- 2008 *From Fur to Bone*, Kinsey/DesForges, Los Angeles, CA

Group Exhibitions

- 2011 *Summer Group Exhibition*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
The Future Is Not What it Used To Be, LeBasse Projects, Los Angeles, CA
New Works with Laura Ball, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
- 2010 *Summer Group Exhibition*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009 *Summer Group Exhibition*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 *Taxonomic Intoxication*, Transmission, Richmond, VA
The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, 31 Grand, New York, NY
- 2007 *No New Tale to Tell*, 31 Grand, New York, NY

Awards

- 2010 *West Prize*, Grand Prize Winner, Philadelphia, PA
- 2008-09 VMFA Professional Fellowship, Richmond, VA

Represented by

Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY

Environmental messages built the landscape for my paintings so they remain prevalent, though not always at the top of my thoughts. Political and social issues come through in the narrative, but again not the focus. I am telling a story, creating a world that in many ways reflects our own. The animals in this world deal with issues just as we do. They have varying religious beliefs, love, family, crime, work, and so on.

McLennan

